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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 11 October 2013 from the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat and, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, has the honour to inform the Secretariat that the Government of Namibia has submitted its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2014-2016 at the elections to be held on 12 November 2013 during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The candidature of Namibia was endorsed by the African Union at its summit held in January 2012, in Addis Ababa.

The Permanent Mission of Namibia has the honour to enclose herewith its voluntary commitments and pledges during its tenure with respect to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Namibia would appreciate the circulation of the present note verbale and the annex thereto as a document of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 115 (c).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 11 October 2013 from the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Candidature of Namibia to the Human Rights Council, 2014-2016

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

Introduction

1. For more than 100 years, the people of Namibia experienced gross human rights violations under colonialism and apartheid rule. Apartheid, a crime against humanity, segregated the people of Namibia in all areas of life according to their tribe and skin colour. Discrimination was based on ethnic and tribal divisions, as well as for social, political and economic differences. As a result, the majority of people were denied their rights, and their traditional way of life was disrupted for many years. Despite this painful history of human rights violations, the people of Namibia embraced the policy of national reconciliation and, at independence, on 21 March 1990, enshrined in the Constitution a bill of rights, which guarantees individual freedoms, equality and justice, on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia is a product of the struggle for sovereignty and human rights, and therefore protects the equality and inherent dignity of all, and guarantees the freedom of association and the freedom of speech and expression, among others. Twenty-three years after independence, Namibia continues to promote and protect human rights at the domestic and international levels. Namibia has therefore decided to announce its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2014-2016.

3. Namibia supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council in the deliberations held at the General Assembly, arguing for a body that would not only serve as a strong advocate and guardian of human rights but would also be representative of all States Members of the United Nations. As this is the first time that Namibia is seeking to serve on the Council, Namibia commits itself to participating actively in the work of the Council and to making meaningful contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

4. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, Namibia announces its voluntary pledges and commitments, as described below.

Voluntary pledges and commitments

To work for a strong and effective Human Rights Council, and to reinforce the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system

5. Namibia is committed to a robust and effective Human Rights Council at the heart of international endeavours in the promotion and protection of human rights. If elected, Namibia will seek clear and strong action by the Council in promoting, protecting and upholding human rights for all. Namibia will work with other

Member States to cultivate a more positive and constructive environment in the Council, where countries can share best experiences and learn from one another. Namibia will work to facilitate open and transparent dialogue among Member States, building on shared goals and priorities in order to achieve meaningful progress.

6. Recognizing that the universal periodic review process has opened up an important space for dialogue on human rights efforts at the national level and can make a real difference on the ground, Namibia will continue to participate actively in the review mechanism and work to ensure that each review is focused on the improvement of the situation of human rights in the State concerned.

7. Namibia will continue its strong engagement in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the only United Nations body with universal membership responsible for addressing human rights issues, in order to promote the work of the Council.

8. Namibia will support the work of an independent and properly resourced Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including by promoting the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system.

9. Namibia will continue its support for the valuable role of non-governmental organizations and civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights at both the State and international levels.

To advance universal human rights

10. Investing in development is investing in human rights. Namibia recognizes that the enjoyment of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social — is essential for development. Equally, development is essential to make the full enjoyment of those rights possible.

(a) Right to food

11. Namibia has made the fight against poverty and hunger a priority of its development programme, which is central to its foreign policy. Namibia continues to support international action to combat maternal and infant undernutrition.

(b) Right to education

12. Namibia recognizes the right to education as a fundamental human right. A large amount of the national budget is spent on the provision of education. The State education policy is based on the premise that all children should have access to free primary education. Namibia is committed to support international efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal education.

(c) Right to health

13. The Government of Namibia has prioritized the provision of health and social services to all Namibians, ensuring equity of access to health-care services to all, with special provisions for those most vulnerable, such as the rural poor, women, children and the elderly. Namibia is committed to international efforts to fight communicable and non-communicable diseases, and will continue to support

national and international efforts to combat malaria, tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS.

(d) Combating discrimination and gender-based violence

14. Namibia pledges to play a full role in efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and to promote gender equality.

15. Namibia has a strong track record in addressing gender inequality. At home, gender equality has the full force of the law, and there is very visible improvement in women's representation in politics, government and the private sector. The National Gender Policy was officially launched in 1997 and adopted by Parliament in 1999 as a legal instrument aimed at achieving gender equality.

16. The Namibian Defence Forces have a workplace policy on human rights and dignity designed to raise awareness of their role and obligations with regard to gender-based violence and human rights. The Defence Forces ensure that personnel deploying on active service to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions around the world receive detailed instructions on upholding human rights, especially for minorities and women, cultural awareness issues and codes of conduct and behaviour for both the conduct of their mission and their individual behaviour.

17. Namibia was instrumental in the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on, inter alia, the promotion of the participation of women in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Namibia also played an important role at the Fourth World Conference on Women, at which the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. Furthermore, Namibia supports the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

(e) Strengthening the human rights treaty body system

18. Namibia firmly believes that the treaty monitoring bodies are central to the functioning of the international human rights protection system. The growth in the number of treaty bodies and in the number of ratifications of international human rights instruments poses challenges for the coherence and functioning of these institutions. Namibia will therefore continue to work with Member States and other stakeholders to help to strengthen the treaty bodies.

To uphold and strengthen human rights at the national level

19. Namibia will continue to enhance its efforts and strengthen existing national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the development of a national plan of action on human rights.

20. Namibia will cooperate fully with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, including the special procedures, by responding promptly and substantively to all their communications and by facilitating their requests for country visits.

21. Namibia remains committed to implementing the more than 80 per cent of the recommendations that enjoyed its support during the first cycle of the universal periodic review, which include, inter alia, enhancing efforts to enact legislation on human trafficking and increasing efforts to combat violence against women. Namibia therefore looks forward to participating in the second cycle of the universal periodic review in an open and constructive manner, to report on progress made in these and other areas.

22. Namibia has ratified core United Nations human rights treaties, and is firmly committed to complying with its obligations, including, inter alia, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

23. Human rights issues are addressed at both the secondary and university levels of education. Human rights also feature prominently in the training of the police and defence forces, at all levels. Namibia is committed to continuing to provide support for human rights education and training domestically, across all sectors of society, in order to raise awareness and respect for human rights.

24. Namibia is fully committed to a pluralistic democratic society. The importance that Namibia places upon this crucial role is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

Conclusion

25. The commitment of Namibia to the promotion and protection of human rights is an underlying principle of its foreign policy. Its deep attachment to the importance of fundamental rights and freedoms for all is grounded in its historical experience. It strongly believes in the need for a shared effort to advance the values at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations. Serving as a member of the Human Rights Council would enable Namibia to make a positive contribution to that effort.